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Improvisations

Stanley Kimmel



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Improvisations

Stanley Kimmel

Author

"SOUVENIRS," Etc.



Copyright 1919
"The Publishers of Little Books"
San Francisco, Calif.

author
TO THE
AUTHOR

*"Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros."
—Ovid.*

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VESPERA

Evening comes and softly floats
The music of a summer's breeze,
And mingles with Apollo's lyre
The sighing of the laurel trees.
On yonder lake the gleaming stars
Have kissed the tiring waves to sleep,
And o'er the far off stretching plain
Golden moon-beams, silent, creep.

Olympus harps again are stilled,
The song is dead, the feast is o'er,
Fair Hebe holds an empty cup,
And nectar spots the golden floor.

NOCTIS SILENTIUM

The day lies buried 'neath a wintry sky,
In cloaks of silence, once vermillion,
Through misty shreds of fading verdant
light,

Selene bathes white-limbed Endymion.
Beside a flaming shield of golden mould,
The ancient Clio grasps a withered quill,
Impatiently, with quivering hand, she
scrawls,

Atropos softly breathes, "Be still, be still."
O where is she of Ilion's fallen towers,
Or Caesar with his treasured wealth and
fame,

And he who roamed a fabled, mystic sea,
That liberty might know a sweeter name—
Are they but as the dust of Fortune's day,
When she strode boldly through archaic
lands

And wedded deathless Immortality,
Then left him with her jewels in his
hands?

LIMON!

Limon! Limon! What thrill thou gavest
me

When first I looked upon thy silent
throng,

When all of life lay dreaming in the calm,
And night winds mingled with a
boatman's song.

Where once the greedy hand of pirate
Spain

Snatched from thy birth-right a
dominion's gold,

Then placed upon the soil a tyrant claw,
And for some tinsel'd god, thy franchise
sold.

What land can breath the air republican
Whose State kneels low before a papist,
crowned?

Is freedom but a gift of regal power,
Must Liberty in scarlet robes be bound?
Where are the warriors of thy classic
days

Who freed thee when thou wert a noble
slave?

Arise! Behold! The lord of yesteryears
Who came as knight remains as royal
knave!

MELPOMENE

(To Sarah Truax)

Amid the sparkling flood of silver sand,
Where sleeps the desert wrapped in
 vestal beams,
Thou art the goddess of the opal streams
That fall from heaven to this torrid
 land.
Like some strange cadence of a saraband
The droning winds chant their nomadic
 themes
O'er crouching tents where each bronze
 Arab dreams
Of Cassim's gold and nights in
 Samarkand.

Who knows, save he whose prison soul
 has bled,
The lonely anguish of these Trappist
 walls,
Or had companionship with living dead
Who jeer the day and chide the night
 yet dread
The coming hour when o'er their serfdom
 falls
The requiem they hear in cloistral halls.

(Garden of Allah)

OLD MEN

Old men always sit alone,
In groups of twos or threes or more,
Like rusted bolts held feebly fast
Upon some queer, old fashioned door,
Whose withered eyes have often mocked
The passing paupers and the kings,
And others strolling by that way,
Ladies of the street and things.
They have seen all, the good and bad,
Known Love and pale, green lipped
 Despair;
Yet still they sit with wrinkled eyes,
And like the dead they stare and stare.

LAW

A child of Custom whom all tyrants
fear,

A gift divine if reason guides thy way,
But tread not purple roads of power by day,
Nor steal with soulless step into the night
Where Pity gropes unpitied in the sight
Of those gold-kings who would by
pillage live,

Lest thou become a red-eyed fugitive
When thou the voice of Anarchy doth
hear.

Where Lust and Greed have built a
vulture throne

The Christ of Justice kneels with
bleeding head,

And Kindness is a stranger in that land
Where Poverty with Crime walks hand
in hand;

For such my native soil doth hold her
dead—

Is this mine heritage of Washington?

Melancholia

Movements from a Symphony



ADAGIO

In the park so melancholy
The sad pines their torches bear,
Towering in the silence, holy,
Cleave the grey, nocturnal air.

Would it were some vale fantastic
Where my soul could meet thine own,
And with purple song chromatic
Dance the hours as roses blown.

Perfumes linger after greeting,
(Once I saw thee weep, and know)
Saw the moon-light quickly fleeting
In the dawn's first lustrous glow.

L'ENVOI

As tones prolonged are softly swept
By jewelled hands on ivory keys,
You passed and only angels wept,
And cold winds stirred the leafless
trees.

ANDANTE

(Qual des Augustines)

The night is green, monotonous,
And rain engulfs the vendor's mart,
It bathes my soul in deepest gloom,
Will not from out my soul depart.

The street lamps glitter dolefully,
Throughout the space of empty halls
Grim phantoms dance half-wittingly,
As eunuchs dance at secret balls.

Now sleeps the river with its fears
Mist hidden by the night's strange
pall,

Nor hears the weird, impassioned plaint
Of rain and tears upon the wall;

Hears not the sobbing of the rain
Or tears upon the cold, grey wall.

Like dusky porcelains, spectral forms
Strut up and down the haunted mall;
They mock the little things they pass,
The rain and tears which sob and fall.

Pieces from a Boudoir
Suite

I

Limbs so pure and white,
What wonderful delight
The pallor of the sheet discloses;
Wrapped in fragile hair
They have that virgin air
Of snow and roses.

• Have the muses seen
Pygmalion and his queen—
Known the marble passion of her eyes?
Swiftly the false moon,
Dances about the room,
Naked, over-wise.

IV

Evening fades and the moon's light
Falls like some soft, blue brocade;
O'er a balcony of jade
Steal the shadows in their flight.

Soul of fastly fleeting dreams,
Like the night whose silver song
Wanes as perfumed silks among
Slender, luring, sapphire beams.

All the grace of woman-kind,
Innocence, quite like a child,
Mirrored in a voice as mild,
Gay as laughing summer wind.

Queries
TWO SONGS

MORNING SADNESS

Why am I thus with sorrow wed,
Who scarce did know sweet childhood's
 guest,
Where are the singing meadow larks
With carols of their morning quest;

Why do the flowers droop their heads
Upon the shadowed garden wall,
Why is the music soft and sad
From out the sparkling water-fall?

WHENCE COMES THIS SONG

Whence comes this song so golden
In the dark and silent night,
Born from my soul's great sadness
Carried on by fancy's flight;

Where go these words of sorrow
Through the ages yet unbound,
Will they, like wintry flowers,
Fall on barren, frozen ground?

PENOMBRA

Before the day her sleepy eyes have
 closed
And Somnus sweeps her into shadowed
 dreams,
Let music float upon the silenced air
In one great symphony of dulcet themes;
Let all the Earth resound in eulogy,
As Sappho sings of some famed hero's
 might,
Till Phoebus drops his gems of aureate
And lifeless falls into the arms of Night.

Pale Sleep, with robes of scented
 asphodels,
Glides swiftly on past mystic twilight
 folds;
And steals into the forest's dim recess
Where he can woo the gaudy marigolds;
The stars peer out with cold and jealous
 eyes
Upon a timid faun who doth forsake
Her lily-bed that she may muse beside
The moon's proud image mirrored in
 the lake.





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